

CHILD WELFARE EMERGENCY SERVICES PROPOSAL
Council Bluffs Service Delivery Area
October 2, 2008

Overview

This proposal is being submitted by the DHS Council Bluffs Service Delivery Area and local shelter care providers in response to SF 2425. Through the plan outlined in this proposal, the following will be achieved:

- A net reduction of five in the number of guaranteed shelter beds in the SDA;
- The creation of emergency services option in Council Bluffs for children who might otherwise be served in shelter care; and
- The establishment of flexible swing bed capacity in Clarinda to expedite transitions of child awaiting group care.

This proposal involves reducing by two the number of guaranteed beds at the Clarinda Academy shelter and three at Children's Square.

The associated funds from all five beds will be diverted to Children's Square for the development of a triage/emergency assessment center where children taken into protective custody will be evaluated while arrangements are being made for foster care or relative placement. At Clarinda Academy, the two shelter beds no longer designated as guaranteed shelter beds will be used as "swing beds" available for use by youth approved for group care placement who are awaiting placement at the Academy.

Planning Team

The development of this proposal is the result of meetings held 7/31/08 and 8/14/08 involving DHS, Juvenile Court Services, Clarinda Academy, Quakerdale, and Children's Square. During those planning sessions, options were identified and the concept for this proposal was developed. Following those meetings, a smaller group consisting of representatives from DHS, Clarinda Academy, and Children's Square met to formalize the plan.

Current Shelter Status

There are three children's shelters located in the sixteen counties of the Council Bluffs SDA:

- Children's Square (licensed for 22, with 15 guaranteed payment beds)
- Clarinda Academy (licensed for 15, with 15 guaranteed payment beds)
- Quakerdale (licensed for 10, with 8 guaranteed payment beds)

Data analysis indicates that placements at Quakerdale and Clarinda Academy tend to involve older children awaiting group care or PMIC placement. However, the usage pattern at Children's Square is significantly different, as the chart below demonstrates:

FY 08 Shelter Care Stay – CB SDA Children		
Shelter	Stays of 5 Days or Fewer	% of Five-Day or Fewer Stays that Were One Day Only
Children's Square	275 (15% of total)	62%
Clarinda Academy	43 (3% of total)	31%
Quakerdale – Manning	15 (2% of total)	33%

The frequency of short-term stays at Children's Square shelter is linked to local law enforcement practice regarding protective custody. It is a common practice in Council Bluffs for law enforcement to take protective custody of children and take them directly to Children's Square shelter. In many cases, DHS becomes aware of the children's placement only after the children have been admitted to the shelter. DHS is then able to arrange for alternate placements – but even the short-term stays at shelter (one day or even less) constitute a placement and the use of a guaranteed shelter bed.

Elimination of Five Guaranteed Shelter Beds

Although guaranteed payment at 15, in FY 08 Clarinda Academy's average daily usage of guaranteed shelter beds was 12.6. Children's Square utilization was 10.5 in FY 08, while guaranteed payment at 15.

Under the proposed plan, two guaranteed beds would be eliminated from Clarinda Academy, reducing the number of guaranteed beds from 15 to 13. Children's Square guaranteed beds would be reduced from 15 to 12. In the event placements at either facility exceed guaranteed capacity, reimbursement to the shelters will be made through non-guaranteed funds.

In the event that this shelter alternatives project is ended, both Clarinda Academy and Children's Square would like the guaranteed payment of 15 beds to be restored for the time period of the current shelter contract.

Funds Available for Emergency Alternative Services

At \$92.36/day, the annualized guaranteed payment of five shelter beds is \$168,557. Assuming an implementation date of 11/1/08, FY 09 funds available for this project are **\$112,371**.

Creation of an Emergency Assessment/Triage Center at Children's Square

The centerpiece of this proposal is the creation of an emergency assessment/triage center at Children's Square. Provision of services will be limited to children (ages 0-17) taken into protective custody and brought to Children's Square. The primary purposes of the Triage Center will be to assess the child's needs, prepare the child for placement, and make arrangements for placement. Upon discharge from the Triage Center, children will go home, to foster care, to relative care, to another placement approved by DHS and the Juvenile Court, or will be admitted to shelter. Children may utilize the Triage Center's services for periods of less than 24 hours.

Services provided at the Triage Center will include but are not limited to:

- Attending to the child's basic needs for food, basic clothing replacement, and hygiene (bathing, lice treatment, etc.);
- Health screening by nursing staff;
- Assessment of functioning using the CAFAS as appropriate to inform placement decisions;
- Referral to DHS for Family Team Meeting and participation of Triage staff in FTMs;
- Teaming with KidsNet to identify foster family placements; and
- Assisting DHS in the screening of relative and suitable other placements.

Services will be provided at the Children's Square campus and will be woven as seamlessly as possible into the existing shelter program, using shelter staff and resources. Children's Square will maintain staffing ratios which accommodate both shelter and triage kids.

Use of Swing Beds for Children Awaiting Placement at Clarinda Academy

As noted above, Clarinda Academy will reduce the number of guaranteed beds from 15 to 13. The two beds no longer guaranteed will be designated as “swing beds.” The two swing beds will be available for shelter placements in excess of the 13 guaranteed beds, use by non-Iowa/non-system youth, and as part of the swing bed proposal, use by foster group care youth.

The use of the swing beds by Iowa foster group care youth will be limited to those youth who have been accepted into the Clarinda Academy foster group care program, approved for placement, and who are simply awaiting a bed within the Academy’s group care program. In such cases, payment will be made using group care funds. The youth will participate in residential treatment programming and schooling at the Academy, but will sleep in the swing bed at the shelter.

Project Outcomes and Evaluation

During FY 09, the data collection focus will be on determining the extent to which the two components of the project are being utilized. Data gathered will include:

For Triage Center

- Number of children served;
- Number of children discharged from Triage before 24 hours vs. number admitted to shelter;
- Discharge plan (where did children go after Triage Center?); and
- Number of children discharged from Triage who were admitted to shelter within the following 6 months.

For Swing Beds

- Number of days swing beds are used for children entering the Clarinda Academy foster group care program
- Number of days swing beds are used as unallocated shelter beds; and
- Number of days swing beds are used for other purposes.

For both programs and for SDA

- Data will continue to be collected on shelter care utilization (expenditures, use of guaranteed and unallocated beds) for comparison with previous FYs.
- This data will be used to determine if the two projects are in fact resulting in a decrease in the use of shelter care.

Time Frames:

9/12/08	Approval of concept by Clarinda Youth Corporation
9/15/08	Draft concept paper to DHS Division of Child and Family Services
9/26/08	Approval of concept from Children’s Square Board
10/7/08	Final approval by Clarinda Youth Corporation
10/15/08	Approval expected from DHS DCFS
10/16/08 – 10/31/08	Concept review and training with DHS, JCS, Clarinda Youth Academy, Children’s Square, and community partners
10/31/08	Contract amendments completed with Clarinda Youth Academy and Children’s Square
11/1/08	Implementation of both service components

